



The Children's LAW Center of Connecticut

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RE: Raised Bill No. 5505: An Act Concerning Family Court Proceedings

**POSITION:** Opposed

**SUBMITTED BY:** Christine Miller

Good afternoon, my name is Christine Miller and I am an attorney in Hartford. I also serve as a board member of the Children's Law Center of Connecticut and I am here to express my grave concern over Bill 5505. It is my sincere belief and concern that this bill will have an enormous detrimental impact on Connecticut's indigent children.

FIRST: Restricting the ability of the Court to order visitation to be supervised will have the effect of severely curtailing a child's contact with a parent. Allegations may come before the Court that raise serious concerns about whether the child is safe in the presence of a parent due to cognitive limitations, substance abuse, erratic behavior, risk of abduction – none of which are covered by the four factors in the bill. While these allegations are being investigated, the Court will have no other avenue except to deny visitation completely. It is the children who suffer by being kept apart from a parent for a substantial period of time.

SECOND: Providing a risk-free avenue for any aggrieved party to file suit against an attorney for a minor child or a guardian *ad litem* will have a chilling effect on anyone's ability to continue to serve children in this capacity. Children will no longer be provided the protection of having an AMC or GAL in these highly contentious, conflict ridden cases. Parents, who are struggling to do the right thing, will not be provided the support a good Guardian *ad litem* may provide, such as referrals for addiction counseling, anger management, parenting classes, or housing or employment counseling provided by other non-profits. We see our role as one that helps parents be better and children be safe and loved by both of them. Making AMCs and GALs vulnerable to costly, personal lawsuits renders the work impossible.

THIRD: The fourth section requires that any medical information about a child should be presented by the health care provider. Our cases are those of indigence. The parties cannot afford to pay the professional fees of a medical provider so they can come to court and testify. Preventing a GAL from testifying about information in a record will have the effect of this

information not coming to light – preventing the court from making a decision based on all relevant information.

I can certainly see the issues this Committee is trying to address with this proposed legislation. However, I fear this legislation will actually exacerbate these issues and remove any protection children are afforded when appointed an attorney or Guardian ad litem. Thus, this legislation is bad for kids and bad for families, especially indigent families.

Thank you for your attention.

Respectfully,

Christine Miller